

California Lighthouse

by Susan Campbell

California Lighthouse towers proudly 125 feet above Aruba's north coast; an island landmark that was named in honor of a ship that sank here more than 100 years ago.

It was during the middle of the night on September 23rd, 1891, when the British steamship *California*, sailing from Liverpool to Venezuela, struck the coast of Aruba and quickly plummeted to a watery grave. Fortunately, all of the *California's* crew, except one (the engineer), was able to make it safely to land.

The following morning, Arubans found vast amounts of goods and provisions washed up on the shore and sold whatever they could at the local market. Soon, this area, previously called *Hudishibana* (a native Arawak name), became known as the California Dunes. The *California* shipwreck also prompted Arubans to plan the building of a lighthouse to warn other seafarers of the possible peril. Construction of the natural stone, cement and chalk lighthouse got underway in 1914 and was completed two years later.

These days, California Lighthouse is still operational, but closed to the public. The much-photographed attraction is famous for its breathtaking views and spectacular sunsets.

Setting the record straight: Some people still confuse the *California* with *SS Californian*, the infamous ship that ignored *RMS Titanic's* SOS calls. The truth is, the *California* sank 21 years before the *Titanic* set sail on her tragic journey to the bottom of the North Atlantic!